

# Planning Statement

Proposed Timber Footbridge at Ponsonby Tarn, Gosforth

Contents

1. Introduction ..... 3

2. Relevant Planning Policies & Advice Received ..... 6

3. Assessment of Current Proposals ..... 8

4. Conclusion..... 9

# 1. Introduction

## Overview

- 1.1 This application is submitted on behalf of NDA Properties Ltd and seeks to obtain planning consent for a timber footbridge at Ponsonby Tarn, Gosforth, following a recent pre-application enquiry with Copeland Borough Council ('the Council') as Local Planning Authority ('LPA'). The following description of development is proposed:

"Erection of timber footbridge incorporating handrails and spanning 2.4m"

- 1.2 This *Planning Statement* has been prepared in support of the accompanying application seeking to construct a formal crossing point. A *Design and Access Statement* also accompanies this application.
- 1.3 The bridge will enable members of the public a to safely navigate the tributary to the south of Ponsonby Tarn. The location of the proposed bridge is shown below at Figure 1 ('the Site').



Figure 1. Site Location

- 1.4 The need to install a formal bridge has been realised following the discovery of an informal structure currently existing at this location, comprising of a thick wooden beam (Figure 2). The proposed bridge would seek to ensure the safe crossing of those looking to traverse this section of the Tarn, given that the existing informal crossing is not considered structurally sound or fit for purpose.



Figure 2. Existing Wooden Beam

## Site Context

- 1.5 The Site lies at the southern tributary of Ponsonby Tarn, with the immediate surrounds comprising of the Tarn itself and arable farmland. The Site also notably abuts a Public Right of Way ('PROW') Public Bridleway (PROW Number: 421010) (Figure 3).

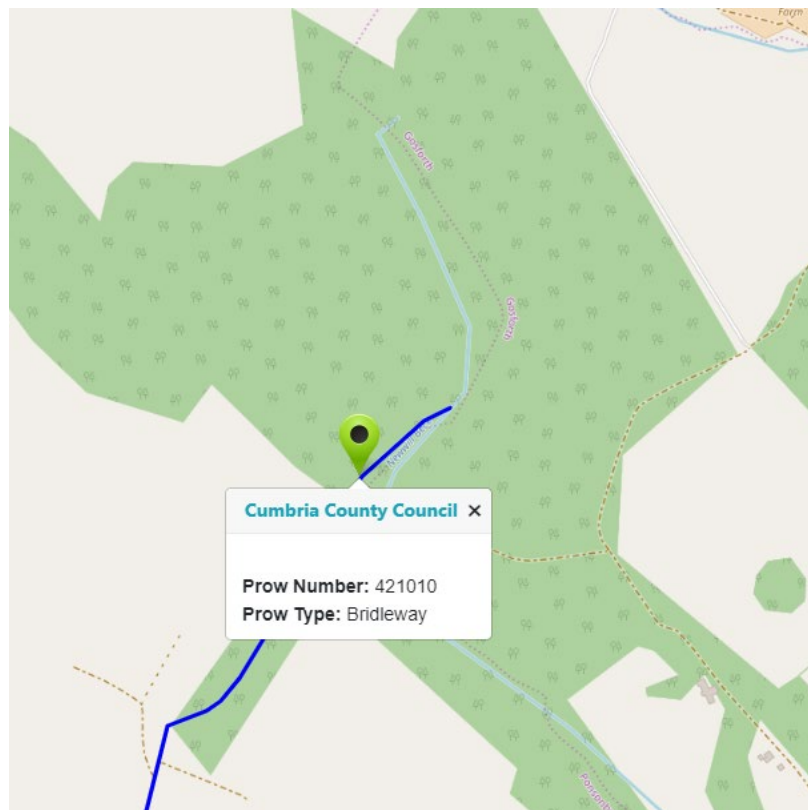


Figure 3. Adjacent PROW (Source: Cumbria County Council)

- 1.6 Given that the bridge is proposed over an existing watercourse, the Site is located within Flood Zone 3 (Figure 4).

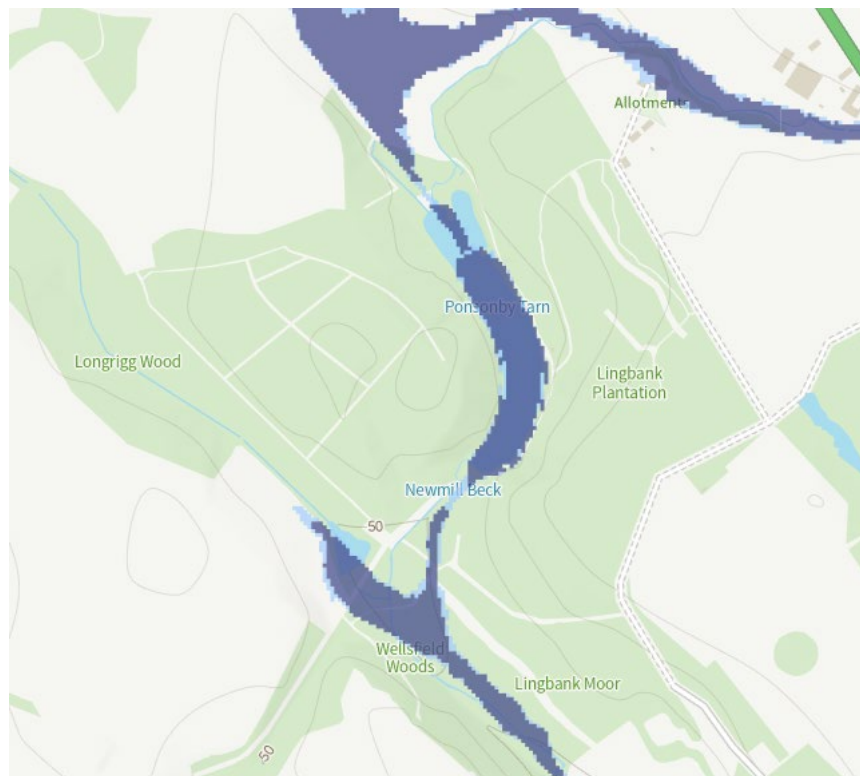


Figure 4. Flood Risk Map (Source: Flood Map for Planning Service)

### The Proposals

- 1.7 The new bridge is proposed to stand at 1.05m in height, 2.4m in length and 0.6m in width comprising of solid timber beams treated with weather-resistant paint. Capping rails will be provided for user safety, which will themselves be supported by main beams and cross beams (Figure 5).
- 1.8 The bridge will be supported by a concrete base at each bank. Loadings have been tested within the accompanying reports and the structure is considered to be structurally safe and sufficiently supportive for its intended use.

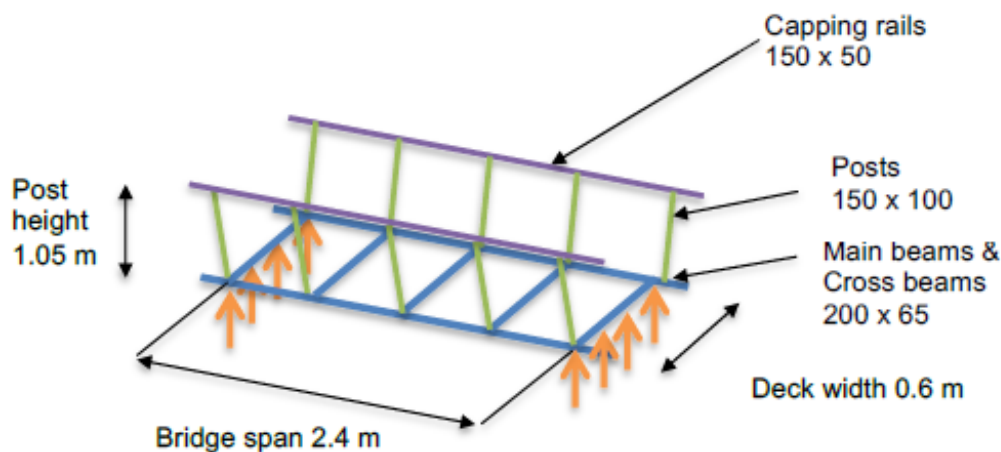


Figure 5. Proposed Footbridge Dimensions

## 2. Relevant Planning Policies & Advice Received

### Adopted Local Planning Policy

2.1 The adopted Development Plan for Copeland Borough Council comprises of the *Core Strategy* and *Development Management Policies Development Plan Document* (adopted December 2013). Policies contained within the Adopted Plan which are of relevance to the proposals are as follows:

- Policy ST1 – Strategic Development Principles: seeks to support development that provides or contributes to the Borough’s social and community infrastructure enabling everyone to have good access to jobs, shops, services, and recreational and sports facilities;
- Policy SS4 – Community and Cultural Facilities: range of services and facilities serving the Borough’s communities will be protected by, amongst others criteria, encouraging provision and retention of good quality services and facilities which meet the needs of local communities and are accessible by public transport, cycling or on foot. Services and facilities which benefit the less mobile or more deprived members of the community and which maximise opportunities for people to improve their health and well being will be prioritised;
- Policy SS5 – Provision of Access to Open Space and Green Infrastructure: adequate provision and access to open space, and the development of the Borough’s green infrastructure, will be promoted through the establishment, improvement and protection of green infrastructure networks connecting open spaces with each other and with the countryside;
- Policy T1 – Improving Accessibility and Transport: the Council will support transport improvements that maximise accessibility for all modes of transport but particularly by foot, cycle and public transport;
- Policy ENV1 – Flood Risk and Risk Management: the Council will ensure development is not prejudiced by flood risk, with individual proposals assessed under Policy DM24;
- Policy ENV5 – Protecting and Enhancing the Borough’s Landscapes: landscapes will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development does not threaten or detract from the distinctive characteristics of that particular area, with the benefits of development outweighing potential harm and in supporting proposals which enhance the value of the Borough’s landscapes;
- Policy ENV6 – Access to Countryside: the Council will ensure access to the countryside for residents and visitors by, amongst other criteria, identifying opportunities to improve access on routes and gateways from settlements;
- Policy DM10 – Achieving Quality of Place: the Council will expect a high standard of design and the fostering of ‘quality places’;
- Policy DM22 – Accessible Developments: development must be accessible to all users and accord with principles including permeable and legible layouts that are convenient for access into and through sites for pedestrians; and
- Policy DM24 – Development Proposals and Flood Risk: where a proposed development is likely to be at risk from flooding or increases risk of flooding elsewhere, a Flood Risk Assessment (‘FRA’) will be required. Development will not be permitted where it is found that: there is an unacceptable risk of flooding; or the development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; or the development would cause interference with or loss of access to a

watercourse and the benefits of the development do not outweigh the risks of flooding. Where a development requires the provision of additional flood defence and mitigation works, any costs, including maintenance, should be met by the developer.

### **Emerging Local Planning Policy**

- 2.2 Whilst not yet adopted, the emerging *Copeland Local Plan 2021-2038* is considered to have limited weight in the consideration of this application. The *Publication Draft Local Plan (January 2022)* includes several draft policies of relevance; namely Strategic Policies DS6PU, DS8PU, CO3PU and CO6PU.

### **National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2021)**

- 2.3 At a national level, the NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and guidance and how these are to be applied. The NPPF is a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- 2.4 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF notes that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users - for example, by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
- 2.5 Paragraph 104 stipulates that opportunities to promote walking and cycling should be considered from the earliest stage of development proposals, with Paragraph 106 noting that planning policies should provide for attractive and well-designed walking networks.
- 2.6 Paragraph 167 states that, when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere - with relevant applications supported by site-specific flood-risk assessments. Paragraph 168 notes that applications for some minor development should not be subject to the sequential or exception tests, but should still meet the requirements for site-specific flood risk assessments.

### **Pre-Application Feedback Received from Copeland Borough Council**

- 2.7 Formal Pre-Application Advice was provided by Planning Officer Christie Burns of Copeland Borough Council as Local Planning Authority on 17 August 2022.
- 2.8 Advice received noted that, as the proposed development seeks to create a new footbridge in place of existing plank, the works were seen to represent an appropriate form of development in accordance with Local Plan policies ST1, ST2, SS4, SS5, DM22 and ENV6.

### 3. Assessment of Current Proposals

- 3.1 In accordance with key policies contained within the adopted Local Plan, the replacement bridge would seek to support the interconnectivity of the Borough's social and community infrastructure by enabling safe passage and access to surrounding areas of interest for local residents; including jobs, services, shops, and recreational facilities.
- 3.2 Policy DM22 in particular notes that development must be accessible to all users, providing convenient access into and through sites for pedestrians. Policy ENV6 similarly seeks opportunities to provide or improve upon existing routes and gateways throughout Copeland Borough, with Policy T1 supporting transport improvements maximising accessibility particularly by foot.
- 3.3 In the context of potential landscape impact resulting from the proposal, and in accordance with Policy ENV5, the new structure will not threaten or detract from the distinctive characteristics of the surrounding landscape given its relatively small scale and structure. It is also considered that the benefits of introducing a safe crossing point for pedestrians should outweigh any perceived harm to the surrounding landscape – particularly when it is noted that the Site abuts an existing Public Right of Way and is therefore likely to be well travelled by members of the public.
- 3.4 Given that the bridge is proposed over an existing watercourse, the Site is subsequently located within Flood Zone 3. However, given the proposed use and conclusions reached within the supporting Flood Risk Assessment ('the FRA') regarding the wider Ponsonby Tarn water reservoir, the erection of a bridge in this location is not considered to represent a vulnerable use in the context of the NPPF. The bridge itself would not increase the risk of flood at the Site or surrounding area.
- 3.5 In addition, the FRA contains an Action Plan to prevent any uncontrolled release of water at Ponsonby Tarn Dam that would lead to potential flooding or threat to the proposed bridge structure. Therefore, all appropriate measures will be in place to minimise the risk of floor or incident to the bridge structure once erected.
- 3.6 Importantly, the proposed structure will benefit from increased stability and structural soundness than the current plank which currently comprises an unofficial pedestrian route across the watercourse, therefore the approval of this application would increase pedestrian safety in accordance with adopted Policies DM22 and ENV6.



## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Permission is sought for a new bridge structure at Ponsonby Tarn, Gosforth to provide safe passage to pedestrians across the existing watercourse - in addition to increasing accessibility and permeability to and through nearby areas of interest, and existing green infrastructure.
- 4.2 The works sought as part of this application are considered to comply with the *Copeland Local Plan and Proposals Map 2013-2028* (2013), *Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016 'Saved' Policies* (2015) and *NPPF* (2021). Therefore, this application should be approved without delay.